

VII

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FLEET ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF ITS VOYAGE

On the first day of their navigation, a little before nightfall, the general called a soldier named Gonzalo Silvestre, a native of Herrera de Alcántara, one of the many whom he had chosen to take near his person, and said to him: "Take care to give orders tonight to the sentries as to the manner of sailing, and direct the constable, who is the chief of artillery, to have all his guns prepared and ready, and if any suspicious-looking ship appears have him fire across it, and observe in everything the order required by good navigation." All this was provided for, as the governor ordered.

The voyage proceeding, then, with very favorable weather, a little after midnight it happened that the mariners of the ship that was to be flagship of the fleet of México, on which was the factor, Gonzalo de Salazar—either to demonstrate its speed and lightness, or assuming that it also was a flagship like that of Hernando de Soto, or, more likely, because the pilot and the master were asleep as a result of the fair weather, and the sailor who steered the ship was ignorant of the rules and laws of navigation—allowed it to outstrip the whole fleet and continue in advance of it a cannon-shot to the windward of the flagship. For either of these two things that mariners may do the penalty is death.

Gonzalo Silvestre, who, in order to give a good account of that which had been entrusted to him, though he had posted his sentinels, was not sleeping (as befits all good soldiers and hidalgos, such as he was), awakened the constable and asked him whether that ship belonged to their fleet and company or was an enemy. He replied to him that it could not belong to the fleet, for if it did, it would not dare to go where it was going because the mariners who did such a thing would incur the death penalty. Therefore he affirmed that it belonged to an enemy. With this both of them determined to fire on it. With the first shot all the sails were pierced through the center, from stem to stern, and with the second shot the upper works of one side were carried away. They were preparing to fire again when they heard its people shouting loudly, asking for mercy, and saying not to fire upon them, that they were friends.

The governor got up at the noise, and the whole fleet was aroused and placed under arms facing the Mexican ship, which, as its speed slackened

because of the damage done to the sails by the cannon-shots, was falling to the leeward upon the flagship, and the latter, which was going after it, soon overtook it. Here there was about to happen another and greater evil and misfortune than that which had already taken place, which was that—as some, in fear and confusion from their dereliction, were more intent upon exculpating themselves than in managing their ship, and the others, in their wrath and anger in thinking that the action was due to want of respect and not to carelessness, and desiring to punish or avenge it, were not watching how or where they were going—the two ships were about to meet and collide broadside. They were so close together that those within them, in order to save themselves from this danger, finding no better remedy, hastily grasped many pikes with which they pushed the two ships apart so that they might not strike. They broke more than three hundred pikes, after the manner of a very fine irregular conflict in a foot tournament, and they produced a good effect. But although the pikes and other sticks prevented a violent collision, they did not prevent the rigging, sails and lateen yards from crossing and striking, so that both were in imminent danger of being sunk, for all was abandoned when everyone attempted to save himself, and the mariners, disturbed with such evident and sudden peril, trusted to no remedy nor knew what to do that would help them. When someone attempted to do something, the clamor of the people, who saw death before their eyes, was so great that they could not hear him; nor would the darkness of the night, which increases terrors, allow them to see what ought to be done; nor could those who had some valor and energy give orders, for there was no one to obey them or to listen when all was wails, shouts, clamor, outcries and confusion.

Both generals and their two flagships were at this pass when God, our Lord, succored them; the *tajamares* [cutwater, which divides the water before it reaches the bow—DB] or knives the governor's ship carried on its lateen yards cut through all the lines, rigging and sails on the factor's ship that held the two together. These being cut, the general's ship, with the good wind that was blowing, was able to draw off from the other, both being free.

Hernando de Soto was so wrathful, as much because of having found himself in this danger just passed and also because of thinking that the act that had caused it had been committed maliciously through disrespect, that he was on the point of committing a great excess in ordering that the factor be beheaded immediately. But the latter exculpated himself with great humility, saying that he was not to blame in any way for what had happened, and everyone on his ship testified to the same effect. With this, and with the

friendly mediators who were not lacking on the governor's ship, who excused and took the part of the factor, the general's ire was appeased, and he pardoned him and forgot all that had taken place. The factor Gonzalo de Salazar, however, after his arrival in México, whenever the events of that night were mentioned always said, with the air of a man somewhat offended by the affair, that it would please him to meet Hernando de Soto on equal terms, in order to charge and challenge him regarding the high words that he had said to him in an excess of anger concerning a matter in which he was not to blame. And it was true that he was not at fault, but neither had the general said anything to him from which he could take offense; but as the one suspected that the action had been malicious, so the other was angered, considering his words to have been offensive. Neither of them forgot the affair, for suspicion and anger have very great force and influence over men so important and powerful as were our two captains.

The mariners of the factor's ship having repaired the damage to the sails and rigging with their accustomed promptness, diligence and skill in such cases, they continued their voyage, giving thanks to Our Lord for having delivered them from such peril.

VIII

THE FLEET ARRIVES AT SANTIAGO DE CUBA, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FLAGSHIP AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE PORT

Without any other event worth relating, the governor arrived on Easter Day, April 21, at La Gomera, one of the Canary Islands, where he found the count who was lord of the island, and who received him with great festivities and rejoicing.

Concerning this episode, Alonso de Carmona in his *Peregrination* says the following:

We left the port of San Lúcar in the year '38, during Lent, and sailed by way of the islands of La Gomera, which is where all the fleets go to take water and replenish the ship-stores. We sighted La Gomera after fifteen days' voyage, and I shall tell two things that happened that day in my ship. One was that two soldiers who were engaged in a fistfight fell into the sea and went under, and

no trace of them was ever seen. The other was that a hidalgo named Tapia, a native of Arévalo, who was going there, was taking a very fine and valuable greyhound, and about twelve leagues from the port it fell into the sea. As we had a fair wind it happened that we could not recover it, and we proceeded on our voyage and came into port. On the morning of the next day the master saw his greyhound on shore and, wondering at it, went to recover it, much pleased. He who had it protested and averred that while coming in a boat from one island to the other they had found it swimming in the sea and had put it in the boat, and he asserted that the greyhound had been swimming for five hours. We took on fresh provisions and other things and proceeded on our voyage. In sight of La Gomera the master of the greyhound came aboard, and the sail gave him a push that threw him into the sea; he sank as if he were lead and never appeared again, which caused much sorrow to the whole fleet, etc.

All these are words of Alonso de Carmona, copied literally and included here because the three events he recounts are notable and also so that it may be seen how his account conforms with ours, alike with regard to the year and to the first fifteen days of the voyage, and to the storm and the port they made, all of which corresponds with our *History*. In the same way and for the same reason I shall include many other passages of his and of Juan Coles, who is the other eyewitness. They were in this expedition, along with my author.

After the three days of Easter in which they took on the needed supplies, they continued their voyage. During those days the governor prevailed upon the count, with many requests and supplications, to give him a natural daughter of his, seventeen years of age, named Doña Leonor de Bobadilla, to take with him and marry off and make a great lady in his new conquest. The count acceded to the governor's demands, confiding in his generosity to perform much more than he promised him, and thus she was turned over to Doña Isabel de Bobadilla, the wife of the adelantado Hernando de Soto, so that receiving her as a daughter, she should take her in her company.

With this lady, whose beauty was remarkable, the governor left the island of La Gomera very well content, on April 24, and with the fair wind he always had he sighted the island of Santiago de Cuba at the end of May. The factor Gonzalo de Salazar had asked permission twelve days before to withdraw with the fleet of México and direct his voyage to Vera Cruz, which he desired very much to do in order to leave another's jurisdiction (for the human will would always prefer command to obedience), and the governor had granted it very readily, understanding the desire he had for it.

The adelantado and those of his fleet were coming into port with much

rejoicing and festivity at seeing the end of that long voyage and their arrival at a place so much desired by them, to attend to and make ready near at hand the things pertaining to their expedition and conquest, when suddenly they saw a man coming whom the people of the city of Santiago had sent out on horseback, running toward the entrance of the port and shouting to the flagship, which was on the point of entering it, saying, "A-port, a-port" (which in the language of sailors, for those who do not understand it, means to the right-hand side of the ship), with the intention that the flagship and those following it should all be lost on some very dangerous shoals and rocks in that part of the harbor.

That pilot and the mariners, who were not as well acquainted with the entrance of that port as they might have been (wherefore is seen the importance of knowledge and experience in this office), turned the ship in the direction indicated by the man on horseback. The latter, who had recognized that the fleet was of friends and not of enemies, turned again and in a louder voice shouted the opposite, "To the starboard" (which is the left-hand side of the ship); that they would be lost. [Garcilaso, apparently unfamiliar with such terminology, reversed a *babor* (port) and a *estribor* (starboard). Shelby's translation is correct.—DB] To make himself better understood, he dismounted and ran to his right, making signs with his arms and his cape and saying, "Turn, turn to the other side; you will all be lost!" Those on the flagship, when they understood him, turned as rapidly as possible to the left, but as hard as they tried they could not prevent the ship from striking so hard against a rock that all on board thought that it was stove in and lost. Resorting to the pump, they brought out along with the water a great deal of wine, vinegar, oil, and honey, many of the casks containing these liquors, which they were bringing, having been broken by the blow of the ship against the rock, at the sight of which were verified the fears that they had felt that the ship was lost. The small boat was launched hastily and took to land the governor's wife and her ladies and maids, and hard after them came some young gentlemen, inexperienced in such dangers, who were in such haste to enter the boat that they lost the respect due to the ladies and did not hold back or allow them to enter first, they feeling that it was no time for courtesy. The general, like a good and experienced captain, was unwilling to leave the ship, though they importuned him to do so, before seeing how much damage it had received, and also in order to be at hand to aid it if this should be necessary, and by his own presence to prevent all the others leaving it. A number of sailors going below, therefore, they found that there had been no damage besides the breaking of the casks, and that the

ship was whole and sound, as was shown when the pump brought up no more water. Whereupon everyone rejoiced, and those who had conducted themselves so badly and had been in such haste to go ashore were ashamed.

IX

NAVAL BATTLE BETWEEN TWO SHIPS WITHIN THE HARBOR OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA, WHICH LASTED FOUR DAYS

For the exoneration of the people of the city it will be just for us to tell the reason that impelled them to give this false notice that led to the events that have been described. Certainly a fair consideration of the incident that caused it, and the stubborn contest that took place there, will show that it was a notable and memorable case, which in some sort excuses those citizens, because the fear in the minds of the common people prevents and hinders good counsels. It must be known, then, that ten days before the governor arrived at the port there entered it a very fine ship belonging to one Diego Pérez, a native of Sevilla, who was traveling through those islands trading. Although he went in the guise of a merchant, he was a very good soldier by land and by sea, as we shall see. It is not known what his rank was, but his habitual dignity and the nobility he showed in his conversation, dealings and trading showed, they say, that he was by rights an *hidalgo*; for certainly his actions were noble. This trading captain [*capitán plático*] brought his ship very well supplied with men, arms, artillery and munitions in case it should be necessary to fight with the corsairs whom he might meet among those islands and seas, they being very common there. After Diego Pérez had been in the port for three days, it happened that another ship, no smaller than his, belonging to a French corsair who was pursuing his enterprise, entered it.

As soon as the two ships recognized one another as belonging to enemy nations, both attacked, and they fought grappled together all day, until night separated them. As soon as the fighting ceased the two captains exchanged visits by sending messengers to one another with very courteous messages and with gifts and presents of wine and conserves and dried and fresh fruits, which each of them had, as if they were two very fast friends. And they made agreements on their word of honor that thenceforth they would not

attack or commit hostilities at night, but only in the daytime, nor would they fire with artillery, saying that hand-to-hand combat, with swords and lances, more befitted brave men than did missile weapons, because cross-bows and harquebuses gave evidence in themselves of having been inventions of cowardly or needy spirits; and that not attacking with artillery, in addition to fighting in a genteel manner and conquering by strength of arm and personal prowess, would have the further advantage to the victor of leaving the ship and the prize he might gain in good condition and not damaged. The truces were kept inviolably, but it cannot be known for certain what they may have had in mind in not attacking with artillery unless it was the fear that both would perish without advantage to either of them. Notwithstanding the agreement made, they kept watch and were cautious at night in order not to be taken by surprise, because a good soldier ought not to trust the enemy's word to the point of neglecting proper precautions for his welfare and life.

On the second day they returned obstinately to the fray and did not stop fighting until weariness and hunger parted them; then, having eaten and rested, they returned anew to the battle, which lasted until sunset. Then they withdrew and took up their positions, and visited and exchanged presents as on the previous day. Each asked after the other's health and offered such medicines as he had for the wounded.

On the following night Captain Diego Pérez sent a message to the city saying that they had seen clearly what he had done during those days to kill or subdue the enemy, and as he had been unable to do so because of finding him very obstinate, he begged them (for it was very important to the city to rid their seas and coasts of such a corsair as that one) to agree to promise him that if he should lose the battle, as seemed probable, they would restore to him or to his heirs the value of his ship, less a thousand pesos. He offered to fight with the adversary until he overcame him or died at his hands, and he asked this recompense because he was poor and had no property except this ship; if he were rich he would take pleasure in risking it freely in their service. If he should win, he would desire no reward from them. The city was unwilling to grant this favor to Diego Pérez; on the other hand they replied rudely, saying that he might do as he liked, that they did not wish to obligate themselves to anything. Seeing the unfavorable reply to his petition and so much ingratitude in return for his good will and intentions, he determined to fight for his honor, life and property without expecting reward from another, saying that he who was able to serve himself so does ill in serving another; that the rewards of men almost always are like this one.

As soon as the third day of the battle of these brave captains dawned, Diego Pérez was ready to fight, and he went against his enemy with the same spirit and gallantry as on the two days past, in order to let those of the city understand that he was not relying upon them in fighting, but upon God and his own good spirit and strength. The Frenchman came out to meet him with no less desire to triumph or to die on that day as on the others. It seems certain that obstinacy and having made it an affair of honor impelled them to fight more than the advantage that might come to one in despoiling the other, because when the ships were taken their contents could have been of little value. Grappled with one another, then, they fought throughout that day as they had on the two previous ones, separating only to eat and rest when absolutely necessary. After a rest they returned to the battle with as much spirit as if it were just beginning, and always with more anger and fury at not being able to conquer. Darkness separated them, with many wounded and some dead on either side. But immediately upon retiring, they visited and regaled one another as before with gifts and presents as if there had never been any difference between them. Thus they passed the night, the whole city wondering that two private persons who were going out to make their living, without any other necessity or obligation to impel them, should persist so obstinately in killing one another, there being no other reward than having killed the other, nor any hope of recompense from their kings, for they were not acting in their service or in their pay; but human passion is capable of all this and more when it begins to prevail.

X

THE NAVAL BATTLE CONTINUES ITS COURSE, UNTIL IT IS FINISHED

With the coming of the fourth day, the two ships having fired a salvo and given a verbal salute to one another, according to the custom of navigators, Spaniards and Frenchmen returned stubbornly to the battle, with the same spirit and determination as on the three days past, although with smaller forces, for they were now very tired and many of them were badly wounded. But the desire for honor, which so influences generous spirits, gave them energy and strength to suffer and sustain such labor. They fought throughout the day, as before, separating only to eat and rest and tend the

wounded, and then they returned to the battle anew until night imposed peace upon them. Having withdrawn, they did not fail to visit one another with their offerings of gifts and fair words. The two such contrary extremes of enmity and friendliness that were in evidence between these captains on those four days certainly are notable; for it is true that their conflict was of mortal enemies anxious to take one another's lives and property, and in quitting it, all became brotherly friendliness, they desiring to make every demonstration possible to show that they were no less courteous and affable in peace than valiant and fierce in war, and that they were no less desirous of conquering in one manner than in the other.

Returning to those [events] of the battle, the Spaniard, who that day had felt some weakness in his enemy, sent to him along with his compliments and gifts to say that he desired extremely that that battle, which had lasted so long, should not cease until one of the two had gained the victory; he begged him to await him on the following day, promising him good rewards if he would do so. In order to obligate him under military rules not to leave that night, he challenged him anew for the battle on the following day, saying that he was confident he would not refuse, for in all the past action he had shown himself such an illustrious and valiant captain.

The Frenchman, making a great show of enthusiasm for the new challenge, replied that he accepted it and would await the next day and many others, if necessary, to accomplish his desire and conclude that battle, whose end he desired no less than his adversary; of this he might be certain and might rest at ease throughout the night, gaining vigor and strength for the following day; and he begged him that that challenge should not be feigned and given slyly and artfully to reassure him and put him off his guard, so that he [the Spaniard] might go to seek safety during the coming night. This he desired, in truth and in fact, in order to show in his person the valor of his nation.

But after all this bravado, when he [the Frenchman] found a propitious time he weighed anchor as silently as possible and set sail, having no compunction at breaking a promise given, to his own prejudice and hurt; and in fact its observance in such cases would be fatuous, for a change of counsel is the part of a wise man, particularly in war because of the instability of its events, not seen in time of peace, and also because its ultimate purpose is to gain victory.

The sentries of the Spanish ship, though they heard some noise from the Frenchman, did not make an outcry or give the alarm, thinking that they were making ready for the coming battle and not for flight. When daylight

came they found that they had been hoaxed. Captain Diego Pérez much regretted that his enemies had gone, because from the weakness he had observed in them on the previous day he was very sure of victory for himself; and still desiring it, taking from the city what he needed for his men, he went in search of his adversaries.

XI

OF THE CELEBRATIONS THEY HELD FOR THE GOVERNOR IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA

As the result of an affair so notable and so strange the city of Santiago was left much disturbed and very fearful, and as it occurred such a short time before the governor reached the port, they feared that it was the recent corsair who, having joined others with him, was returning to sack and burn the city. Therefore they gave the false directions of which we have told so that they might be wrecked on the rocks and shoals that are at the entrance of the harbor.

The governor disembarked, and the whole city went out with much rejoicing and gladness to receive him and give felicitations for his happy arrival. In apology for having angered him with their ill-directed precautions, they recounted at more length and in detail all the events of the four-day battle of the Frenchman with the Spaniard and the visits and the presents that were exchanged, and they begged him to pardon them, for their great fear had given rise to this bad counsel. But they did not exonerate themselves of having been so cruel and ungrateful toward Diego Pérez, as the governor learned later in more detail, and he wondered at it no less than at the fight and the courteous exchanges between the two captains. Because it is certain that they informed him that, besides the ungrateful reply they had given to the protection that Diego Pérez had offered them, they had been so severe with him that during the whole four days that he had fought, the battle being in their service, and the whole city having come out to see it every day, they had never offered to aid him while he fought or to give him so much as a jar of water while he was resting; rather they had treated him as scornfully as if he had been of a nation and a religion inimical to theirs. Nor had they been willing to do anything against the Frenchman to their own advantage, for by

sending twenty or thirty men on a bark or raft to make a feint of falling upon the enemy from the other side, without ever engaging him and simply by diverting him, they could have given the victory to their friend. Any assistance, however small, would have been enough to win it, for their forces were so nearly equal that they were able to fight four days without either's gaining an advantage. But the people of the city were unwilling to do this or anything else for themselves or for the Spaniard, as if they themselves were not Spaniards, fearing that if the Frenchman were victorious he would sack or burn it, bringing in others to help him, as they had suspected him of doing, and not remembering that an enemy by nation or by religion, being victorious, does not know how to have regard for the evils that were not committed against him or gratitude for favors received or compunction at breaking a word or a promise given, as is seen by many examples, both ancient and modern. Therefore in war (especially against infidels) let the enemy always be regarded as an enemy and suspected, and the friend as a friend and to be trusted; for the latter ought to be relied upon, and the former feared and his word never trusted; better to lose one's life than to rely on it, because as infidels they boast of breaking their word and hold it as an article of religion, especially against the faithful. Therefore the governor did not fail to blame those of the city of Santiago who had not aided Diego Pérez, because he was of their same religion and nation.

As we said, the general was received with much festivity and universal rejoicing throughout the city, for from the favorable reports of his prudence and affability his presence had been much desired. To this satisfaction was added another, no lesser one, which doubled the pleasure and gladness, in the person of the bishop of that church, Fray Hernando de Mesa, Dominican, who was a holy man, and had gone in the same fleet with the governor, and was the first prelate who had come there. He was almost drowned in disembarking from the ship, for at the moment when his lordship was leaving the ship and stepping into the boat, the latter moved outward in such a manner that he could not reach it (because of his long robes) and fell between the two vessels. As he came to the surface of the water his head struck the boat, and he was about to perish when the sailors, jumping into the water, brought him out. The city, finding itself with two such important personages for the government of both estates, ecclesiastical and secular, for many days did not cease to entertain them, sometimes with dances, balls and masquerades, which were held at night; sometimes with games in which they ran and speared bulls with cane spears. On other days they entertained themselves on horseback by riding at the rings, and those who excelled in

this sport either in dexterity with arms and in horsemanship, or in ingenuity in letters, or in novelty of invention, or in elegance of attire, were given prizes of honor consisting of ornaments of gold and silver, silk and brocade, which were set aside for the victors. On the other hand, they also gave rewards of abuse to those who performed worst. There were no jousts or tournaments, on horseback or on foot, for lack of armor.

Many of the gentlemen who had come with the governor took part in these celebrations and entertainments, both to show their skill in all these things as well as to entertain the people of the city, for the satisfaction was mutual. For these celebrations and entertainments the many and excellent horses—alike in performance, size and color—that they have in the island were of much assistance (as they always are both in sport and in work); because in addition to the natural excellence of those of this country, they bred them at that time with great care and in large numbers. There were private persons who had in their stables twenty or thirty horses, and the wealthy [had] fifty or sixty, for profit, because for the new conquests that had been made and were being made in El Perú, México, and other places, they sold very well, and this was the most important and largest source of revenue the inhabitants of the island of Cuba and its environs had at that time.

XII

THE PROVISIONS THE GOVERNOR OBTAINED IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA, AND A NOTABLE CASE CONCERNING THE NATIVES OF THOSE ISLANDS

For almost three months the governor's people amused themselves with celebrations and entertainments, all being peace and harmony between them and the people of the city, for they treated one another with all friendliness and good hospitality. The governor, who was attending to more-weighty matters, visited during this time the pueblos that were in the island, appointed ministers of justice to remain in them as his lieutenants, and purchased many horses for the journey. His chief subordinates did the same, for which reason he aided many of them even more than he had done in San Lúcar,

because in order to buy horses it was necessary to assist them more generously.

The people of the island presented many to him, for as we have said they raised them in large numbers, and that country was then prosperous and wealthy and very well populated with Indians, almost all of whom hanged themselves shortly thereafter. The reason was that, as that whole region is a very warm and humid country, the natives who were there were delicate and lazy and unsuited to labor; and because of the great fertility of the land and the many fruits it produced, there was no necessity for them to work very much in sowing and harvesting, for from the little maize that they sowed they gathered each year more than they needed for obtaining a simple living, and they desired no more. Inasmuch as they did not recognize gold as wealth or esteem it, they regarded taking it out of the streams and from the face of the land where they were bred as an evil, and they felt excessively the molestation the Spaniards occasioned them in the matter, however slight it might be. Also, as the devil incited them on his part and could do whatever he liked with a people so simple, vicious and idle, it came about that, so that they might not have to extract gold, which is abundant in this island and of good quality, they hanged themselves in such manner and so hastily that one day at dawn there were fifty adjoining houses of Indians who were hanged, together with their wives and children, in the same pueblo, there scarcely remaining one man alive in it. It was the most pitiful thing in the world to see them hanging from the trees like thrushes caught in a snare, and the restraints the Spaniards adopted and applied were not enough to prevent them. The natives of that island and its environs were consumed by this such abominable evil, and today there are almost none of them left. This fact gave rise later to the present high price of Negroes, to be taken to all parts of the Indies for labor in the mines.

Among other things that the governor provided for in Santiago de Cuba was to order that a captain named Mateo Azeituno, a gentleman who was a native of Talavera de la Reyna, go with some men by sea to rebuild the city of La Havana, because he had received news that a few days before French corsairs had sacked and burned it, not respecting the temple nor venerating the images that were in it, whereat the governor and all his people, as Catholics, were much distressed. In short, the general provided everything that seemed to him necessary for proceeding with the conquest, to which end that which we shall tell was of no little assistance. This was that in the Villa de la Trinidad, which is one of the pueblos of that island, there lived a very

wealthy and prominent gentleman named Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa, a near relative of the most illustrious house of Feria. He visited the governor in the city of Santiago de Cuba, and as he was there for some days and saw the gallantry and display of so many gentlemen and such good soldiers as were going on this expedition, and the magnificent equipment that was provided for it, he could not restrain himself, now that warlike affairs were recalled to his mind, and his own desires for them were kindled anew. He thereupon offered himself voluntarily to the governor to go with him for the conquest of La Florida, so renowned. Neither his age, now more than fifty years, nor the many hardships that he had undergone, alike in the Indies, in Spain, and in Italy, where in his youth he had triumphed in two remarkable battles, nor his large property, many cattle, and acquisitions by arms, nor the natural desire that men usually have to enjoy them, could deter him. Putting it all aside, he desired to follow the adelantado, for which purpose he offered him his person, life and property.

The governor, seeing such heroic determination and that he was not moved by desire for wealth or honor, but by the natural generosity and warlike spirit this gentleman had always had, accepted his offer, and having thanked him in extravagant terms, which were justified as an expression of the honor such a great deed merited, he named him as lieutenant general of his whole fleet and army. Some days previously he had deposed Nuño Tovar from this position for having married clandestinely Doña Leonor de Bobadilla, the daughter of the count of La Gomera.

Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa y de la Cerda, as a generous and very wealthy man, gave magnificent assistance for the conquest of La Florida, for besides the many Spanish, Indian and Negro servants he took on this expedition, and besides the rest of the equipment and movables of his household, he took thirty-six horses for his personal use and more than fifty others that he presented to private gentlemen in the army.

He provided a large supply of salt beef, fish, maize, cassava, and other things the fleet needed. He was the cause of many of the Spaniards who lived in the island of Cuba being moved, in imitation of him, to go on this expedition. With all these things, in a short time there were made ready those things needed so that the fleet and military forces could leave and set out for La Havana.

XIII

THE GOVERNOR GOES TO LA HAVANA, AND THE PREPARATIONS HE MAKES THERE FOR HIS CONQUEST

Toward the end of August of the same year of 1538 the general left the city of Santiago de Cuba with fifty mounted men to go to La Havana, having left orders that the rest of the horses, three hundred in number, should come after him in troops of fifty, each group leaving eight days after the previous one so that they might be better accommodated and provided for. He ordered that the infantry and all his household and family should go by sea, sailing around the island, all of them meeting at La Havana. The governor, having arrived there and having seen the destruction that the corsairs had made in the town, assisted its vecinos and inhabitants from his own resources in order to help rebuild their houses; and he repaired as best he could the temple and the images destroyed by the heretics. As soon as they arrived in La Havana, he gave orders that a gentleman named Juan de Añasco, a native of Sevilla who was acting as accountant of his Majesty's imperial hacienda and was a great mariner, cosmographer and astrologer, should go with the most experienced seamen in the two brigantines to the coast and explore the shores of La Florida, to see and note the ports, creeks, or bays that might be there.

The accountant went, and traveled for two months up and down the coast. At the end of this time he returned with a report of what he had seen and brought with him two Indians whom he had seized. Seeing the good results that Juan de Añasco had obtained, the governor ordered that he go back again and make a very careful examination of the coast so that the fleet could go directly to a suitable anchorage without having to cruise along the coast. Juan de Añasco returned on this errand and traveled along the coast with all care and diligence for three months, at the end of which he came back with a more accurate report of what he had seen and discovered there, and where the ships ought to anchor and make land. From this voyage he brought two other Indians whom he had picked up by dint of industry and persuasion. From this the governor and all his people derived much satisfaction, in having the ports where they were to disembark known and examined. At this point Alonso de Carmona adds that (because of Captain Juan de Añasco and his companions having been lost for two months on an unin-

habited island where they ate nothing except pelicans, which they killed with clubs, and sea snails, and because of the great risk they ran of being drowned when they returned to La Havana) upon disembarking, all who came in the ship went on their knees from the edge of the water to the church where a mass was said for them; and after having fulfilled their promise, he says, they were very well received by the governor and all his people, who had been made very uneasy by the fear that they had perished at sea, etc.

While the adelantado Hernando de Soto was in La Havana preparing and providing what was necessary for his journey, he learned that Don Antonio de Mendoza, then viceroy of México, was making ready forces to send to conquer La Florida. The general, not knowing to what port he was sending them and fearing that the two might encounter and hinder one another, and that trouble might arise between them as had happened in México between the marqués del Valle, Hernando Cortés and Pánphilo de Narváez, who had gone in the name of Governor Diego Velázquez to demand an accounting of the forces and the trust that he had given him, and as had occurred in El Perú between the adelantados Don Diego de Almagro and Don Pedro de Alvarado at the beginning of the conquest of that kingdom—for which reason, and in order to prevent the infamy of selling and buying the men, as they told of those captains, it seemed to Hernando de Soto that it would be well to advise the viceroy of the titles and authority that his Majesty had conceded to him, so that he might be informed of them, and also to request him not to recruit men or hinder his expedition, and if necessary to make requisition and protest with them [i.e., his titles and authority—CS]. He sent to México for this purpose a Galician soldier named San Jurge, an able man capable for any business. He returned within a short time with a reply from the viceroy, who said that the governor might safely make his *entrada* and conquest in the place that he had indicated, without fear that the two would meet, for he was sending the men whom he had recruited to another region far distant from where the governor was going; that the land of La Florida was so large and broad that there was room for all; and that not only would he not attempt to stop him, but on the other hand he was desirous and willing to help and assist him in case of need, and thus he offered his person and property and everything to which his office and administration gave him access. The governor was satisfied with this reply and very grateful for the viceroy's offer.

By this time, which was the middle of April, all the cavalry that had remained behind in Santiago de Cuba had arrived in La Havana, having tra-

versed by very short stages the 250 leagues [actually about 450 miles—CS], more or less, that lay between the two cities.

The adelantado, seeing that all his forces, both cavalry and infantry, were now assembled in La Havana, and that the time when they would be able to sail was drawing near, named Doña Isabel de Bobadilla, his wife and the daughter of Governor Pedro Arias de Avila, a woman of much goodness and discretion, as governor of that great island, and as her lieutenant a noble and virtuous gentleman named Joan de Rojas. In the city of Santiago he left as lieutenant another of his gentlemen, named Francisco de Guzmán. These gentlemen were governing those two cities before the general arrived in the island, and because of the good reports he heard of them, he left them in the same positions that they had before. He bought a very fine ship called the *Santa Ana*, which happened to arrive at the port of La Havana at that time. This vessel had come as flagship for the conquest and discovery of the Río de la Plata with the governor and captain-general Don Pedro de Zuñiga y Mendoza, who was lost on the journey and, returning to Spain, died of sickness at sea. The ship arrived at Sevilla from that voyage and returned on another to México, whence it was coming back when Hernando de Soto purchased it; it was so large and fine that he took eighty horses to La Florida in it.

XIV

A SHIP ARRIVES AT LA HAVANA IN WHICH COMES HERNÁN PONCE, COMPANION OF THE GOVERNOR

The governor was now very nearly ready to embark to go on his conquest and was only awaiting favorable weather, when another ship entered the port, coming from Nombre de Dios. It appeared that it entered unwillingly, forced by the foul weather it had encountered, for during four or five days in which it contended with contrary winds they saw it come up to the entrance of the port three times and as often return to the open sea, as if avoiding that port, so as not to enter it. But it could not withstand the high seas caused by the storm, and though its principal passenger had offered great inducements to the mariners not to enter that port, they were forced to make it, however

unwillingly, being unable to do anything else, for there is no resisting the fury of the sea. Wherefore it must be known that when Hernando de Soto left El Perú to come to Spain, as is told in the first chapter, he had made a compact and association with Hernán Ponce to the effect that both should share that which the two of them might gain or lose during their lives, alike in the repartimientos of Indians that his Majesty might grant them and in the other things of honor and profit they might have. For Hernando de Soto's intention, when he left that land, was to return to it to enjoy the reward he had deserved for the services rendered in its conquest, though later, as has been seen, his thoughts were directed elsewhere. This compact was made then and afterward among many other gentlemen and leading persons who took part in the conquest of El Perú; I even came to know some of them who observed it as if they were brothers, enjoying the repartimientos that had been granted them without dividing them.

Hernán Ponce (whose parentage and country I was unable to learn, except that I heard it said that he was from the kingdom of León), after the arrival of Hernando de Soto in Spain, received in El Perú a very rich repartimiento of Indians (a concession which the marqués, Don Francisco Pizarro, made him in his Majesty's name), which gave him much gold and silver and many precious stones. With these things and with what more he could collect as the value of jewels and household furniture, for then everything was sold in exchange for gold [*a peso de oro*: this could also mean "at a very high price"—DB], and with the collection of some debts that Hernando de Soto had left him, he was coming to Spain very well supplied with money. Since he had learned in Nombre de Dios or in Cartagena that Hernando de Soto was in La Havana with such a collection of men and ships to go to La Florida, he desired to pass by at a distance without touching there, in order not to make an accounting between them and share with him things that he was bringing. He even feared that he might take possession of all of it, as a man who was necessitated to do because of heavy expenditures. This was the reason why he had held out for avoiding that port if he could, but it was not possible because fortune and storms at sea have no respect for anyone, and slight or favor whomever they wish.

As soon as the vessel entered the harbor, and the governor learned that Hernán Ponce was aboard, he sent visitors to welcome him and offer him his lodgings and all the rest of his possessions, offices and honors, for as companion and brother he owned the half of what he had and could command. Following this greeting, he went in person to see him and bring him ashore.

Hernán Ponce did not desire so much courtesy and brotherliness, but after they had spoken together with the usual fair and polite words, dissimulating his anxiety, he excused himself as best he could from going ashore, saying that because of his great labor and little sleep during those four or five days of storm at sea they were not ready to disembark; that he requested his lordship to permit that he remain aboard the ship, for that night at least, and that in the morning, if he were better, he would come to kiss his hands and receive and enjoy all the courtesies that he offered him. The governor let him have his own way, to show him that he did not wish to oppose him in anything, but sensing his ill will, he ordered very secretly that guards be posted by sea and by land who should keep a careful watch during the ensuing night and see what Hernán Ponce himself was doing.

The latter, not trusting in his companion's courtesy, nor being able to understand that it could be so great as he later saw it to be, nor taking counsel of anything except avarice (whose counsels always are to the prejudice of him who takes them), prepared to place under cover and conceal on land a large part of the gold and precious stones he was carrying, not considering that in that whole region he could not find a safe place for it, either on sea or on land, where it would be better to trust to the good will of another than to his own care; but the timid and suspicious always chooses a remedy which is a greater evil and injury. Thus did this gentleman, who, leaving the silver in order to make a show with it, ordered all the gold, pearls, and precious stones he was bringing in two small coffers, all of which exceeded 40,000 pesos in value, to be taken from the ship at midnight and carried to the pueblo to the house of a friend, or to be buried on the shore [near the] ship, so as to come back and recover it after the quarrel he feared he would have with Hernando de Soto. But the opposite happened, because the guards and sentries who were watching, concealed in the woods, which are very luxuriant in that port and along the whole coast, seeing the small boat coming toward them, remained quiet until whomever it was carrying should disembark, and when they saw the people on land at a distance from the boat they accosted them. The latter, abandoning the treasure, fled to the boat; some reached it and others jumped into the water in order not to be killed or taken prisoner. Those on shore, gathering up the spoils, took all of it to the governor, which occasioned him sorrow, seeing that his companion had become so suspicious of his friendship and amity as was shown by that act. He ordered it to be kept concealed until he saw how Hernán Ponce would come out of the business.

XV

THE THINGS THAT PASSED BETWEEN HERNÁN PONCE DE LEÓN AND HERNANDO DE SOTO, AND HOW THE GOVERNOR EMBARKED FOR LA FLORIDA

When the next day came Hernán Ponce left his ship in such grief and affliction at having lost his treasure when he was thinking to put it in safety, but dissimulating his sorrow, he went to lodge at the governor's inn, and they talked together alone for a long time about things past and present. Coming to the incident of the night before, Hernando de Soto complained to him with much feeling about the lack of confidence that he had shown in his friendship and brotherliness, for not trusting to it, he had attempted to conceal his property, fearing that he would take it away from him, which he was as far from doing as his future actions would show. So saying, he ordered brought before him everything that had been taken on the night before from the people on the boat and gave it to Hernán Ponce, bidding him look to see if anything were missing, and if so he would have it restored. And so that he might see how different his intent had been in not breaking the association and bond he had formed, he made him to understand that everything that he had spent to make that conquest, and his having asked it of his Majesty, had been under this union, so that the honor and profit of the expedition might go to both; and he could confirm this from the witnesses who were there, in whose presence he had executed the instruments and declarations necessary for it. For his further satisfaction, if he [Hernán Ponce] desired to go on that conquest, or not to go, as he liked, he [De Soto] said that whatever he chose to do he would at once renounce in his favor whatever title or titles he might desire to have therein of those his Majesty had granted to him. He said furthermore that he would be much pleased if he would advise him of everything that would be conducive to his desires, honor, and advantage, so that he might accede to his wishes, much to the contrary of what he had feared.

Hernán Ponce was confused by the governor's great generosity and by his own too great suspicion, and omitting explanations, for he found none to excuse him, he replied that he begged his lordship to pardon his past error and to be good enough to continue and confirm the favors that he had done him in calling him companion and brother, in which he held himself to be

very fortunate without pretending to any higher title, because for him there could be none. He desired only that the instruments of their association and friendship be renewed in order to acknowledge it more publicly, that his lordship be attended by very good fortune on the conquest, and that he allow him to go to Spain. God granting them life and health, they would again enjoy their companionship, and afterward, if they wished, they would divide what they had gained. As a sign that he accepted for himself half of that which might be conquered, he begged his lordship to permit that Doña Isabel de Bobadilla his wife receive 10,000 pesos in gold and silver to help defray the expenses of the expedition, for in accordance with the terms of the association there belonged to his lordship half of what he was bringing from El Perú, which was a larger amount. The governor took pleasure in doing what Hernán Ponce asked, and much to the satisfaction of both there were renewed the writings of their association and friendship, and they maintained it during the time they were in La Havana. The governor directed his people secretly and led them by example in public to treat Hernán Ponce as they would [the governor], and this was done; all addressed him as lordship and respected him as the adelantado himself.

The matters we have told being concluded, and it appearing to the governor that the time was now propitious for navigation, he ordered the supplies and other things that were to be taken to be embarked with all haste, and when all were loaded on the ships and ready to go, the horses were embarked. In the ship *Santa Ana* were eighty; in the ship *San Cristóbal*, sixty; in that called *Concepción*, forty; and in the other three smaller vessels, the *San Joan*, *Santa Bárbara*, and *San Antón*, they embarked seventy; in all they took 350 horses on this expedition. When the military forces were embarked, which with those of the island who desired to go on this conquest, not counting the sailors of the eight ships, the caravel, and the brigantines, [they] came to a thousand men, all excellent people, well trained in arms, with equipment for themselves and trappings for their horses, so that neither up to that time nor afterward has there been seen here such a good force of men and horses assembled at one place for any expedition made in the conquest of the Indians.

Concerning the whole matter of ships, men, horses and military equipment, Alonso de Carmona and Juan Coles are in accord in their accounts.

The governor and adelantado Hernando de Soto took this number of ships, horses, and fighting men, exclusive of mariners, from the port of La Havana when he set sail on May 12 of the year 1539 to make the entrada and conquest of La Florida. He took his fleet so well supplied with all kinds of

provisions that one seemed to be rather in a very well-provisioned city than navigating on the sea. There we shall leave him to return to a new disturbance that Hernán Ponce caused in La Havana, where under pretext of obtaining fresh provisions and awaiting a better season for the voyage to Spain, he had remained until the governor's departure.

Thus it is that, eight days after the general sailed, Hernán Ponce presented a writing to Juan de Rojas, the lieutenant governor, saying that he had given Hernando de Soto 10,000 pesos in gold that he did not owe, impelled by the fear that he would take away from him, since he had the power, all of the property he was bringing from El Perú. Therefore he demanded that Doña Isabel de Bobadilla, Hernando de Soto's wife, who had received them, be required to return them; otherwise he protested that he would complain of it before the majesty of the emperor, our lord.

When Doña Isabel de Bobadilla knew of this demand she replied that there were between Hernán Ponce and Hernando de Soto her husband many accounts both old and new that must be settled, as would appear from the instruments of the company and association formed between them. From the same it was apparent that Hernán Ponce owed Hernando de Soto more than 50,000 ducats, which was half of the expenditure he had made for that conquest. She therefore ordered the justice to take Hernán Ponce into custody and keep him well guarded until the accounts might be adjusted, which she offered to do at once in her husband's name. Hernán Ponce learned of this reply before the justice performed his duty (for there are double spies wherever there is money), and in order not to get into more difficulties and dangers like the past ones, he set sail and came to Spain, without awaiting the settlement of accounts, in which he would have been found to owe a large sum of money. Very often the avarice of self-interest blinds men's judgment, though they be rich and noble, causing them to do things that serve only to display and publish the meanness and depravity of their spirits.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK OF LA FLORIDA

BY THE INCA